

Lesson two: Stereotypes and the media

Ages 12–14

+ Lesson overview

This is the second of six lessons, focusing on empowering and supporting young people as they develop relationships. This lesson analyses how young people and their relationships are portrayed through the media, including the increased sexualisation of media content, and the impact this can have on expectations and stereotypes relating to gender and relationships.

Learning objective

To learn how media affects people's expectations of themselves, others and relationships.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Explain what gender stereotypes are and why these can be unfair, misleading or limiting.
- Describe how people and relationships can be affected by media influence and gendered stereotypes.
- Identify strategies to manage pressure and influences from sexualised media, including social media.

Resources

- Box or envelope for questions
- A3/flipchart paper [4 pieces, each with one of the posters from Resource 1: *Media review* attached in the centre]
- Washing line or cord and paper clips
- Resource 1: *Media review* [1 per class displayed around the room with space to write around- see above]
- Resource 2: *Tara and Armand's scenario* [1 per group of 3-4]
- Resource 2a: *Strategy cards* [1 per group of 3-4]

Lesson summary

Activity	Description	Timing
Introduction	Introduce learning objectives and outcomes and reinforce ground rules.	5 mins
Baseline assessment	Create a mind map in response to key questions to demonstrate their understanding of stereotypes.	10 mins
Media review	Analyse sources of pressure and perpetuation of stereotypes found across a range of media.	20 mins
Strategies washing line	Suggest strategies to manage the effects of stereotypes and assumptions in a relationship scenario, then rank how effective they expect these to be.	15 mins
Reflection and endpoint assessment	Return to their mind maps from the start of the lesson.	5 mins
Signpost support	Remind young people how to access further advice, guidance and support about media and relationships.	5 mins

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include guidance on ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, relevant subject knowledge, communication, and handling questions effectively.

Keywords

Media, sexualisation, expectations, perceptions, gender, stereotypes

Baseline assessment

➤ Introduction – 5 mins

Negotiate or revisit ground rules for the lesson. In this lesson, it is particularly important that young people do not share any specific media examples they are aware of online if devices are permitted in the classroom, including when discussing the stereotypes in the media review activity.

Explain that young people can put questions in the question box, either anonymously, or with their name on if they would like to have a follow-up conversation.

Introduce the learning objectives and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will explore how sexualised media can affect people's expectations and perpetuate stereotypes in regards to gender and relationships.

Ensure all the posters from *Resource 1: Media review* are displayed around the classroom, and that the washing line or cord for the Strategies Washing Line activity is hung up, before beginning the lesson.

➤ Baseline assessment – 10 mins

Ask the class to independently create a mind map showing their current understanding of stereotypes. Use the questions on Slide 3 to help prompt the class to explore the topic further.

The class should keep their mind maps safe until the end of the lesson, when these will be revisited.

Take feedback and generate a class mind map of key ideas to gauge starting points.

Core activities

➤ Media review – 20 mins

Ask the class to look at *Resource 1: Media review* around the room. The class should discuss where representations of gender can be seen in media, for example in print, online media, film and music videos. They should then annotate the examples in response to the questions on Slide 6.

Take some feedback as a whole class discussion and prompt the class to think about:

- What are the similarities and differences in the pressure created for people of different genders?
- Why might the people creating this media use stereotyping and generate pressure on the viewer/reader?
- How might someone be affected by the media, both on a personal level and in regards to their expectations of others and relationships?

Key learning:

- Media can often portray gendered stereotypes. For example, that women are (or should be) passive, in need of protection from men, and focussed on emotions, relationships and fashion. That men are (or should be) strong, risk-seeking, and aren't overly concerned or affected by emotions. Stereotypes can be restrictive to people of any gender, and can be difficult for people who don't 'fit' the stereotypes associated with their gender, as well as for non-binary and trans people.
- **NB: Young people may wish to further discuss their views on gender identity. While this is a related topic, in order to meet the outcomes for the lesson it is important to focus the discussion on the effects of stereotypes on people of any gender.**
- Media can sometimes use these stereotypes to sell goods, playing on the concerns and anxieties people experience. Other times the use of stereotypes can be caused by having little representation in creative teams, so these views aren't challenged before an advert or other form of media goes out to the public.
- Stereotypes may affect someone's feelings about themselves, how they appear and how they act. If a person doesn't look or act the way they think they should from what they see in the media, this could have a negative effect on their self-concept and their emotional wellbeing. These stereotypes could also affect how a person acts towards others, including in relationships. They might make unfair and inaccurate assumptions about what a person might be interested in, or able to do, based on their gender alone.

Support: Identify three key differences in how the examples in Resource 1: *Media examples* portray boys/men and girls/women.

Challenge: Give feedback to one of the posts, explaining the effects this may have and how their advertising or publishing approach could be improved.

› Strategies washing line – 15 mins

Ask the class to read the scenario on *Resource 2: Tara and Armand's scenario*.

In groups of 3-4, ask the class to write down their ideas about what Tara and Armand might do in this situation. Challenge groups to come up with at least 10 ideas, even if they don't think all of the suggestions are helpful. Explain to the class that these strategies might apply to one aspect of the scenario, like the effect social media is having on their perceptions of themselves, or on the scenario or relationship as a whole.

Show the class which end of the washing line indicates the most effective strategies and which end indicates the least effective strategies. Then ask them to share their suggestions and arrange them on the washing line according to how effective they think these may be.

Key learning:

- Media, including social media, can affect how people perceive themselves in comparison to others, and can give inaccurate and harmful representations of how people should behave in relationships. Often, representations are based on tropes or stereotypes that don't depict respectful behaviours, or communicating personal boundaries.
- Armand's behaviour towards Tara is being influenced by the attitudes of his friends, and from the behaviours of characters in the media. Whilst he might be experiencing some confusion about what's acceptable, he isn't respecting Tara's rights or boundaries. If either character was concerned about the influences they were experiencing, they could access support from trusted adults, school staff or external organisations like Childline.

Support: Hand out *Resource 2a: Strategy cards* and ask them to choose three strategies they think would be most effective to help Tara and Armand, and one that they think would be unhelpful. When the class comes together to organise strategies on the washing line, young people can add their chosen strategies.

Plenary/assessment for end of learning

➤ Reflection and endpoint assessment – 5 mins

Ask the class to return to their mind map from the start of the lesson.

In a different coloured pen, they should add any new learning and make changes as needed.

Ask the class to consider, on their own, how they might challenge stereotypes when they experience them. They can write this down, but as this is a personal reflection, they do not have to share this with the class.

➤ Signposting support – 5 mins

If young people require advice on what they have discussed in the lesson or have concerns, signpost them to support at home or in school (such as parents/carers, tutors and head of year.)

- Childline: childline.org.uk or 0800 1111

Extension activity

Extension 1:

Redraft one of the images from *Resource 1: Media review* to demonstrate a more balanced portrayal of people of different genders.

Extension 2:

Write a letter to a magazine editor explaining what changes they should make to the front covers of their magazine to challenge stereotypes.